

Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council
Smyrna Rest Stop
5500 DuPont Highway
Smyrna, DE 19977
Meeting Minutes
November 19, 2018
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Members Present: Darryl Garner, member, and Blake Roberts, member, via Telephone: William McCafferty, member.

Division for the Visually Impaired Staff Present: Elisha Jenkins, Director; Deborah Bradl, Social Service Senior Administrator; Jill Morrison, Constituent Relations; and Grisel Espinosa, Administrative Specialist I.

Public (via telephone): Carol King-Ries

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:13 a.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Meeting minutes for October 8, 2018 were not approved due to lack of quorum.

Old Business:

The Technology Fair held on October 18, 2018 at Delaware Technical Community College Terry Campus in Dover was well attended. Participants enjoyed the event and provided positive feedback. Seventeen vendors provided demonstrations of several assistive technology items and a variety of various information about community resources. There were various workshops and breakout sessions that were available. Darryl Garner presented the Advisory Council Awards.

Requests for DVI:

- 1) Technology Chats/Webinars
- 2) DVI staff to present at meetings

One of the members asked if the Teachers are braille-proficient. Elisha Jenkins stated that the Division for the Visually Impaired has twelve teachers that serve two hundred eighty students. Twenty of those students are primary braille learners. The Division has openings and is recruiting for six more positions.

Election of Officers: A request for nominations for officers will be sent out to the membership for a response by 12/3/18 for submission. The membership will vote on the Chair and Vice-Chair positions at the December 10, 2018, meeting.

Annual Report:

The 2017 and 2018 annual reports are being finalized and will be forwarded to the Council membership for review.

New Business:

The Council will start preparation for the VRAC Retreat traditionally held in March. Darryl Garner suggested the New Castle Library as the location.

Darryl Garner encouraged council members to participate in the town hall meetings to advocate for services. Carol King-Ries recommended evening meetings to increase participation.

Director's Report**Independent Living Services:**

During this reporting period, staff attended an emergency preparedness workshop, which focused on the elderly and disabled populations at the Long Neck CHEER Activity Center in Millsboro. The event was co-sponsored by BlindSight Delaware, and included representatives and co-facilitators from Sussex County Emergency Preparedness, Citizen Corps, Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative, Delaware Emergency Management Agency, and Public Health. The workshop combined exhibits and discussions on getting prepared for emergencies, creating a plan of action, and gathering supplies for a disaster kit.

The final visit from the Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Center (OIB/TAC) group from Mississippi State University took place October 12 and October 13 and encompassed low vision training curriculum for staff. Moving forward, the Independent Living Services Unit staff will continue to work on goals of reducing the number of cases that are open without action, increasing outreach, and having more SMART goals established for the program and the consumers.

Throughout the month of October, the Independent Living Unit hosted a nutrition program facilitated by Anita Lowman from the University of Delaware's Cooperative Extension Program. The purpose of the program is to educate consumers on making smart food choices, food preparation, and portion sizes. At the end of each session, Ms. Lowman demonstrates the preparation of a healthy dish. Six participants are enjoying the program and all feedback has been positive to date. The program will continue to be held Wednesdays throughout the month of October

Education/Orientation and Mobility:

On October 19-21, DVI hosted transition-aged students for a weekend of activities at the Children's Beach House. There were 9 high school students in attendance. The students participated in activities such as self-advocacy, job exploration, Student Council, and recreational activities. Feedback was positive from the students and staff. Traditionally, there has been one event at the Children's Beach House with students ranging from fifth grade to twelfth grade. DVI is planning to host the same event for younger students in the spring.

Technology/Materials Center:

On Thursday, October 18, the Division's Independent Living Services Unit, Vocational Rehabilitation Unit, and Technology Training Unit sponsored a Technology Fair at Delaware Technical Community College (DTCC) at the Terry Campus in Dover. The event displayed examples of new and forthcoming technical equipment for the blind and visually impaired.

Staff from each of the Division's Program Units were present to answer questions and provide information regarding the Division's services to those in attendance, while staff from the Division's Technology Training Center provided demonstrations of equipment.

The Delta Gamma Sorority received the 2018 Governor's Outstanding Volunteer Award in the field of Education and Literacy. One of the main duties the Delta Gamma Sorority has performed is helping the Instructional Materials and Resource Center (IMRC) complete various production tasks as well as the collection of customer satisfaction survey for the Technology, Orientation and Mobility, and Independent Living Services programs. An awards ceremony held in Dover on October 24 at the Dover Downs Hotel.

Business Enterprise Program:

Micromarkets seem to be the next platform for BEP locations. Micromarkets offer great potential for Randolph-Sheppard blind entrepreneurs. One challenge is ensuring that micromarket kiosks are accessible to blind users. Vendors such as Avenue C, Avanti, 365, and 32 Markets are being pressured to make their systems accessible. Great progress is being made.

A BEP Fact Sheet has been developed and will be used for Outreach. A brochure has been drafted as well with highlights of the current operators.

District Administrator's Report:

State Goals and Priorities

As of 11/07/2018 the Vocational Rehabilitation caseload is 230.

State Goals and Priorities VR's combined state plan has...

- (1) One is to increase the Quality of employment outcomes, and Quantity of Employment Outcomes by 15% from the prior fiscal year.

Goal for State Plan is 35 (@15%). For FFY the Division for the Visually Impaired exceeded this goal by three and employed successfully 38 individuals.

Goal for RSA is 31 (one more than the year before). For FFY the Division for the Visually Impaired exceed this goal by seven and employed successfully 38 individuals.

Current caseload: 230

Total individuals employed (10/1/2017-9/30/2018): 38

Individuals ready to work: 31

Median income (10/01/2017-9/30/2018): \$18.43

Transition aged students 14-21: 76

Transition aged students 14-24: 90

Training and Education: 61

(2) The second goal is to Review, Evaluate and Implement Improvements to Transition Services
Implement Improvements to Transition Services.

(3) Improve Marketing and Outreach to Potentially Eligible Division for the Visually Impaired Consumers.

Division for the Visually Impaired Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors provided information to potential transition students, parents and community at the Transitions Forum event hosted by NCall, Central Middle, Restoring Central Dover and Wesley College SGA which was held at Central Middle School on 11/3/18. Several presenters provided information on the process of moving from middle school to high school and high school to college and/or careers. The discussions surrounded what to expect next and how to navigate through admissions and financial aid. The organization also provided book bags and coats to the students.

(4) Improve Assistive Technology Services through Innovation and Expansion.

On October 18, 2018, the Division for the Visually Impaired sponsored a Technology Fair. The fair provided the attendees with the opportunity to explore new and innovative assistive technology available to improve both home and work environments.

The keynote speaker was Louis E. Orslene, Co-Director of Job Accommodation Network, the premier national resource on workplace accommodations and disability employment. The keynote address focus was "Capitalizing on the Talent; not the Impairment Techniques and Technologies for Creating an Inclusive Workplace.

Announcements:

There was a discussion about the new voting machines and how it will be beneficial for the workers to be trained by the Division for the Visually Impaired. Another topic that was discussed was that the blind and visually impaired community needs to advocate for themselves to improve services in this area.

Adjournment: 11:36 am

Respectfully Submitted

Grisel Espinosa

Administrative Specialist I

Division for the Visually Impaired